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Fourth Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 9-13 February 1987

LC/NAIROBI

PROGRESS REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DURING THE PERIOD 1985-1986

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Africa, the report, recommendations and resolutions adopted at the third meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment were submitted to the seventh meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole which was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 7 to 14 April 1986.

2. The Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole considered the report, recommendations and resolutions of the Joint Committee and submitted its comments and recommendations thereon to the twelfth Meeting of the Conference of Ministers of the Commission which was also held in Yaoundé from 17 to 21 April 1986.

3. After considering the conclusions of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole, the Conference of Ministers adopted resolution 571 (XXI) entitled "Human Settlements". 1/

4 In the resolution, the Conference of Ministers endorsed the report, recommendations and resolutions adopted by the third Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment and, inter alia, invited the Commission on Human Settlements to assist the Joint Regional Committee in the implementation of the regional human settlements priorities decided by the said Committee and recommended that co-operation between the Commission secretariat, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and all relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations should be strengthened with a view to promoting human settlements activities in the African region.

5. The purpose of this report is to give a general overview of the main activities undertaken by the Economic Commission for Africa in the field of human settlements since the third Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee in July 1985.

II. STATUS OF ACTIVITIES

6. The activities undertaken by the Economic Commission for Africa in the field of human settlements during the period August 1985-January 1987 to implement its programme covered the following points:

A. Planning of human settlements

(i) Study on mechanisms for integrating human settlements programmes in the socio-economic development process

7. This study was based on the results of two meetings of groups of experts from 10 French-speaking African countries and 10 English-speaking African countries. All aspects of human settlements planning and its inclusion in socio-economic planning were covered. From the study, recommendations were made to ECA member States on how to go about integrating human settlements development programmes in socio-economic planning.

(ii) Training in human settlements

8. Two major activities, a training course and a study for the development of training facilities in Africa were undertaken in the area of staff training.

1/ See Annex

9. The training course was jointly organized by ECA and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic from 3 to 21 September 1985. Forty African countries were invited to send trainees; 24 of them did. The African experts were given 20 lectures on various aspects of human settlements planning and visited facilities in four USSR Republics, namely, Russia, Uzbekistan, Georgia and the Ukraine.

10. The study on the development of staff training was based on answers to a questionnaire on staff needs and training institutions which was prepared and sent by ECA to all member States. The study contained a number of recommendations on action to be taken at the national and regional levels; implementation of the recommendations could improve staffing needs.

B. Development of building materials and construction industries

(i) Study on an integrated approach to the evaluation of needs with respect to construction in Africa

11. This study identifies the needs of the construction sector in Africa, proposes an approach for assessing such needs and how to satisfy them. The document notes that unless the infrastructural requirements of key sectors such as agriculture, industry, transport and communications are integrated with those of the construction sector, the Lagos Plan of Action and Africa's priority recovery plan will be a pipe dream. The study identifies areas in which assistance is required to improve productivity in order to meet requirements with respect to infrastructure in the regions.

(ii) Promotion of research on building and building materials

12. The Subregional Research Centre on Building and Building Materials (CERBM) which has a membership of five west African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Senegal and Togo) has established its operational organs, the Governing Council and the Advisory Committee on Research; its 1987-1991 Programme of Activities has been approved. ECA is making efforts to encourage other countries of the West African subregion to participate in the activities of the new Centre.

13. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) financed the 1985-1986 programme of the Subregional Centre. This made it possible to carry out the consultancy mission to participating countries to prepare background documents on interim administrative arrangements for the 1985-1986 phase and the priority needs of member countries. The second meeting of the Governing Council and the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on Research were held and crucial decisions were taken with respect to the continuation of the Centre's activities. A draft document was also prepared and submitted for financing under the fourth UNDP programming cycle 1987-1991.

14. In pursuance of resolution 11 of the eighth meeting of the Council of Ministers and Commissioners of State of the MULPOC for the Great Lakes countries, a pre-feasibility study on the establishment of a subregional research centre on building and building materials for the States members of the Economic Community of Great Lakes countries (CEPGL) was undertaken. The study was carried out by a joint ECA/MULPOC/CEPGL mission. It contains recommendations and proposals on practical financing arrangements and a schedule of implementation.

C. Programme for institutionalizing popular participation in the field of housing in Africa

15. A study on means of establishing programmes for institutionalizing popular participation in housing for low-income earners was undertaken. The study analyses various mass housing policies, describes the advantages of popular participation and its impact on housing policy. It contains a number of recommendations for implementation at the national and regional levels in order to promote popular participation as an alternative to housing policies for low-income earners.

D. Co-operation between ECA and other United Nations and international organizations

16. In pursuance of the recommendations of the third meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee, ECA has maintained contact with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS (HABITAT). A co-operation agreement between the two organizations is being finalized and their respective work programme will be harmonized.

17. In accordance with the provisions of United Nations General Assembly resolution 32/162, UNCHS financed the participation of ECA in the ninth Meeting of the Commission on Human Settlements held in Istanbul, Turkey in May 1986.

18. ECA participated actively in the preparation and the deliberations of the regional seminar on Squatter Settlements and Low-cost Housing which it organized jointly with UNESCO, the Experimental Centre for Research and Study for Building and Public Works (CEBTP) of Paris and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing of Socialist Ethiopia from 18 to 21 November 1985 in Addis Ababa.

19. At the request of Environment and Development in the Third World (ENDA) and the United Nations University (UNU) ECA participated in the organization of a seminar on Food and Energy for the Urban Deprived Population in Africa from 9 to 13 December 1985 in Addis Ababa.

20. At the invitation of the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) and the International Savings Bank Institute (ISBI) of Geneva and the German Savings Banks and Giro Association (DSGB), ECA participated in a seminar organized in West Berlin, the Federal Republic of Germany, from 15 to 23 January 1986 to which 11 African countries had been invited. The African countries were mostly represented by Directors of National Banks. The main topic of the seminar was on financing housing for low-income earners in Africa.

21. ECA also maintained contact with several organizations including FAO, ILO and the International Union of Testing and Research Laboratories for Materials and Structures (RILEM) in order to implement joint activities.

E. Problems encountered in implementing activities

22. The contribution of human settlements to overall development is rarely appreciated to its full extent. Hence the resources allocated to human settlements programme are not commensurate with its pivotal role in the overall development process. In view of the budgetary constraints under which the United Nations system is operating has reduced the operational budget of the Human Settlements Section to nil. Consequently, staff members of the Section were unable to render advisory services to member States and mobilize extrabudgetary resources for the implementation of the human settlements programme.

23. Until recently, the human settlements programme has not benefited from bilateral technical co-operation. So far only the United Nations Development Programme has contributed to the implementation of project for the production of building materials in the African region. In the hope that this assistance will continue, the ECA has prepared and submitted a project document on the extension of the project for the production of building materials. Similarly, a project document has been prepared on the development of human settlements in support of the implementation of Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER). The project focuses on the rationalization of land use distribution pattern in conformity with the policies on population redistribution and resettlement programmes approved by APPER. This document has been recently transmitted to interested donors.

571 (XXI). Human settlements

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling its resolutions 316 (XIII) of 1 March 1977, by which it decided to establish the Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements, and 358 (XIV) of 27 March 1979 on human settlements,

Recalling also its resolution 408 (XVI) of 10 April 1981 by which it extended the mandate of the Intergovernmental Regional Committee to include environmental matters,

Having examined the report of the third Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment, held at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 22 to 26 July 1985,

Convinced that Habitat and construction needs remain very high and absorb more and more resources of member States and that the latter should receive increased assistance in order to enable them to overcome this obstacle,

Aware of the vital role to be played by applied research in improving the human settlements situation in general and the promotion of local building materials and construction industries in particular,

Recalling in this connection, the conclusions, resolutions and recommendations adopted in this field by various meetings, particularly the 1986 meetings of the policy organs of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres,

1. Endorses the report and recommendations adopted at the third meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment and the relevant conclusions of the recent meetings of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres' policy organs;

2. Urges member States, in co-operation with the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa, to take appropriate steps to implement the specific activities defined in the recommendations adopted by the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee at its third meeting;

3. Calls upon the Commission on Human Settlements to assist the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee in the implementation of the regional human settlements priorities decided by the said Committee;

4. Commends the Executive Secretary of the Commission, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Programme and bilateral and multilateral donor agencies for the appreciable assistance they have provided to date in the field of promoting local building materials and construction industries in the African region;

5. Requests the Executive Secretary, in particular, to do everything possible to ensure that applied research into the development of local building materials and construction industries, on a subregional and regional basis, receives substantial assistance over the period 1987-1991 from the United Nations Development Programme, other donor agencies and countries, and the non-governmental organizations concerned;

6. Recommends that co-operation between the Commission secretariat, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and all relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations should be strengthened with a view to promoting human settlements activities in the African region.

247th meeting,
19 April 1986